



See page 29.

THE
PROSTITUTE,
A POEM,

BY THEOPHILUS PERKINS.

“ Give ear fair daughter of Love to the instruction of Prudence, and let the precepts of Truth sink deep in thy heart; so shall the charms of thy mind, add lustre to the elegance of thy form; and thy beauty, like the rose it resembleth, shall retain its sweetness when its bloom is withered.

* * * * *

“ Remember thou art made man's reasonable companion,
not the slave of his passion.”

ECONOMY OF HUMAN LIFE.



CHEPSTOW:

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Introduction.

THERE, perhaps, is no subject which so much demands our most serious consideration as Prostitution, and the numerous hordes of those unhappy beings, with which every populous town abounds, are truly distressing to the feelings of humanity; and, the brutal manner they too often are treated with, by their betrayers, would cause a reflecting mind to imagine itself in the midst of a race of unenlightened Savages, whose delight is

the misery of their fellow-creatures ; instead of being in a country, renowned for benevolence and philanthropy.

This melancholy truth is too obvious to admit of doubt :---then surely, the tear of commiseration ought not to be withheld from the multitude of those miserable wretches, who inhabit almost every street in the great metropolis ; and, though numbers of them are thus unhappily situate by their own misguided and perverted inclinations ; yet, by far the greater number owe their misfortunes to men, destitute of every principle of honor, integrity, and humanity :---thus, under the specious garb of friendship and love, is the innocent and unsuspecting female, by one fatal step, plunged into a labyrinth of woe, from which she in vain seeks to be extricated !

INTRODUCTION.

I shall not, by an attempt to delineate the various sources of Prostitution, trespass longer on the generosity of my reader, but trust the alarming increase of those unhappy mortals will apologize for my obtruding on the public, a production so little calculated to stem the torrent of seduction ; and that it will not be found to militate, in the smallest degree, from the strict precepts of Religion and Morality ; but calculated to raise commiseration in the bosom of sensibility, for the unhappy objects of its theme:---And, that its sequel will, in some degree, be the means of guarding some virtuous female, on the brink of ruin from the machinations of the wily and hypocritical coxcomb.

There remains now, but for me to hope a candid and judicious public, will readily overlook the numerous imperfections with

which it abounds, placing the principles it inculcates against its imperfections ; considering too, it has been wrote in the hours I have alone been able to obtain from the confinement of a laborious profession ; under these impressions I am flattered the severities of criticism will be softened, and thus, I with diffidence submit it.*

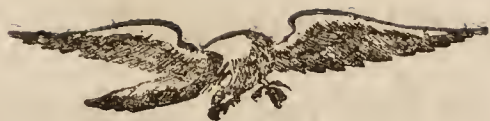
* The Author is by profession a Printer, yet does not presume to superior excellence in composition, being, almost wholly self-educated; and the following Poem is published jointly through the solicitation of friends, and under the idea of its proving a guard to the deluded victim of Seduction.



ARGUMENT.

Reflections on a passing Prostitute---Her history commences---Drove from her father's door---Benighted in a storm---Invokes the Supreme for her betrayer and her father---Dreadful retrospect---Proceeds on her journey---Is relieved by strangers---Becomes ill---Recovers, and returns in penitence to claim her father's pardon---A funeral procession---Proves her father's---His anxiety and forgiveness related---Her agony---Church-yard scene---Proceeds to London---Becomes a Prostitute---Falls into great distress---Description of her abode and its inmates---In extreme misery is taken ill---Recovering, leaves London in hopes to reform, but is unable---To drown reflection flies to intoxication---Her present appearance---Leave her in hopes of a return to virtue and a friendly aid---Profligate men are the principal betrayers of female innocence---Men of sense spurn duplicity---Reflections on the miseries of Prostitution, with some advice to the fair and youthful reader---Picture of a virtuous female---Conclusion.

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The Prostitute,

A POEM.



WITH pity view yon way-worn wretch,
And her sad fate deplore;
For she, alas, Love's victim is,
Friendless,---forlorn,---and poor!

Behold her doom'd to meet the scoff
Of each insulting foe;
And neither pity nor relief,
To her, no one does shew.

Disease, with all its train of woes,
Her haggard frame does tear ;
Each day, to her, fresh mis'ry brings,
Yet, still, no friend to cheer.

Dark is the retrospect which she
Does ev'ry morning view ;
Nor are there brighter hopes exhal'd,
When's fled the morning dew.

With hasty steps she flies the world,
To shun each piercing view ;
Fearful, lest she should recognize
A friend, who once she knew ;

Stern Justice, too, how swift she flies,
Lest she her form should hold ;
For, oft within her walls she's sat,
With hungar---faint, and cold.

Yet, should one pity'ng look be seen,
Then keen remorse does sting;
The thoughts of better days they pain,
Despair her spirits wring.

Now, mark her lot, ye youthful fair,
Lest ye pursue the road
Where ruin throws her venom'd shafts,
And vice your souls does load.

Forsook by him, who thus had caus'd
Her sad and dire disgrace;
Then, spurn'd by all her friends was forc'd
To fly from place to place.

A mother's fost'ring care she lost;
Lost, by this shameful fall;
Whose watchful spirit seem'd to her,
From vice her soul to call.

THE PROSTITUTE,

Her father's door, alas, too shut,
How wretched is her lot ;
'Thus, forc'd to leave the place where stood
A tender parent's cot.

Still, see her hov'ring round the spot
Where first her breath she drew ;
Unconscious whether to remain,
Or, mis'ry to pursue,

Now, from her native home she roves,
With falt'ring steps, and slow ;
Nor knows she where a friend to seek,
Asham'd her face to show,

The sky, but just serene and clear,
Now low'rd to her view ;
And greater horror seem'd o'erspread
At ev'ry sigh she drew.

The whistling wind a storm foretold,
Day, too, was almost spent ;
The bosom of the troubled air
Was with commotion rent.

Now, distant thunder from afar,
Was heard with awful sound ;
While she for shelter anxious look'd,
Yet, none was to be found.

The storm now beat with dreadful rage,
Depicture her despair ;
Hungry,---faint,---without a friend,
O'erwhelm'd with grief and care.

Still, see her wander, forlorn---sad,
Her heart dissolv'd in woe ;
Her mind is too, with grief oppress'd,
Her steps, how short !---how slow !

At length the storm its fury bates,
The wind was still and hush ;
She, cold and wet, with trembling pace,
Drew near a hawthorn bush.

While night his sable mantle spread,
And sombre gloom around,
Seem'd to obscure all Nature's works ;
She sunk upon the ground.

And, in the attitude of pray'r,
The Deity address'd ;
Thus oft we feel devotion most,
When most we are oppress'd.

“Forgive, O God, that youth,” she cry'd,
“Who taught me first to stray ;
Oh, teach him thy unerring truth,
And thy just laws t' obey,

“ Guard thou his feet from paths of guilt,
Let him no more seduce ;
But, let his actions evermore,
Far nobler deeds produce.

“ Let not my form his joys allay,
When honor is his guide ;
But, when seduction he pursues,
Let recollection chide.

“ My father, too, O, Power supreme !
Do thou protect him here ;
And, when remov'd from this frail world,
Oh, take him to thy care !

“ For all his tender love for me,
In my more youthful days ;
When, with a parent's fost'ring care,
He taught me thy just ways.

“ My mother’s soul, that’s wing’d on high,
Oh, let it rest with thee !
And, in thy love, find that repose,
It once look’d for in me !

“ As, for myself---offended God !
What can I dare to ask ?
A wretched outcast, sore despised,---
Oh, ’tis an ard’ous task !---

“ Yet still, O God, thy mercy shew,
Nor e’er remove thy love ;---
Oh,---take me to thy blest abode,
My gratitude to prove !”---

No further then, could she proceed,
Her tongue refus’d its aid ;
With horror she review’d the past,
And did herself upbraid.

With woe oppress'd, she tott'ring fell,
Stung with remorse and grief ;
And in the arms of sleep soon found
A transient relief.

Fresh thunder roll'd,---fresh torrents fell,
Still she unconscious slept ;
And tho' all nature seem'd convuls'd,
Yet silently she wept !

But now, the sun shot forth his rays,
The sky was bright and clear ;
She 'woke, but to her troubled mind,
What horror did appear.

Alone,---forlorn,---no hopes to sooth,
On a deserted heath ;
The only prospect in her view,
A sure and painful death.

A torpid langour siez'd her brain,
In vain she strove to rise ;
Each swollen limb refuses aid,
To God she rais'd her eyes.

And when her limbs their wonted pow'r
Had partially regain'd ;
She wish'd, too late, from lawless joys,
She ever had refrain'd.

But see, she once more travels on,
This pilgrimage of woe ;
Pleas'd with the hope each rising hill,
Some friendly hut would shew.

Yet many dreary hour elaps'd,
Ere hope her bosom cheer'd ;
And when her flatt'ring beams she felt,
Then stern reproof appear'd.

At length, unto her longing view,
A humble cot appears ;
Surrounded by content and peace,
It mis'ry ever cheers.

A meand'ring riv'let pass'd its door,
Where drooping willows hung ;
The sturdy oak o'ershades it too,
Where oft the linnet sung.

Long there a frugal pair had dwelt,
Yet, gen'rous,---just, and free ;
And tho', the wanderer they chide,
They sooth his misery.

With them, wholesome, tho' simple food,
Was ever to be found ;
The wretched and distress'd did there,
Their grateful blessings sound.

'Twas there her trembling steps she bent,
Some sustenance to crave;
For fast her frame was sinking to
The dreaded yawning grave.

They saw her grief, and soon her woe,
Did cheerfully assuage;
Thus true it is, bright friendship shines
Alike in youth and age.

“ Say, stranger, say, what load of woe,
Thy youthful form weighs down;
And why with such unequal pace
Thou flies the busy town?

“ Yet, why should we another pang,
Add to thy tender breast;
Sufficient 'tis for us to know,
That thou art now distress'd.

“ Then come and taste our simple fare,
And cheer thee on thy way ;
Our humble means thou’rt welcome to,
Then stay awhile we pray.

“ The houseless child of want, with us
May rest its weary’d form ;
And by our frugal fire may sit
Securely from the storm.”

Encourag’d thus, she truly did
Her wretched tale relate ;
And humbly ask’d, with placid looks,
Some pity for her fate.

“ Within my bosom, once there glow’d,
A heart devoid of guile ;
Then did my parents oft me cheer,
With fond and tender smile.

“ But ah, in luckless hour I fell,
A prey to lawless love ;
Then, soon by ev’ry friend forsook,
Doom’d wretchedly to rove.

“ Thus, now by one most fatal step,
No cheering hope I find ;
For to my sad and wounded heart,
Is conscious guilt firm join’d.”

“ Thy pangs we wish not to increase,”
This gen’rous pair then said ;
“ But come and rest thy care-worn frame,
For we’ll not thee upbraid.

“ ’Tis God, alone, who all supports,
Do then on him rely ;
For all our actions does he view,
With an impartial eye.”

Behold her seated at the board,
Of this most lib'ral pair ;
Who strove by ev'ry mean they knew,
To soften her despair.

But still their kindness was in vain,
She sunk o'erwhelm'd in woe ;
A dreadful sickness seiz'd her frame,
Nor further could she go.

Long was the time she there remain'd,
With sad disease oppress'd ;
Still they with tender watchful care,
Sought to procure her rest.

And, when at length, she took her leave,
Their blessing she receiv'd ;
Yet sore oppress'd still was her mind,
Tho' of much pain reliev'd.

“ Farewell kind friends, I’ll ne’er forget,
The tender care you’ve shewn ;
And may our heav’nly Father great,
Reward you when I’m gone.

“ Tho’ in the paths of vice I’ve trod,
With an uneven pace ;
Yet will I now in penitence,
Go seek my father’s face.

“ For sure when ev’ry pang I’ve felt,
His gen’rous heart does hear ;
He’ll once more ope his parent arms,
And take me to his care.

“ Yes, too,---methinks I see him sink
In melancholy grief ;
Still I a wretched parricide,
Withhold him my relief.

“ Once more my gratitude accept,
’Tis all I have to give ;
And while I wander destitute,
May you in comfort live.”

“ Adieu,” said they, “ and may you meet
A parent’s blessing, kind ;
And in his drooping age may he,
A daughter in you find.

“ Waste not your time in useless grief,
Let honor be your guide ;
Your duty to your father act,
Be that your only pride.

“ Go, seek him too, and claim his love ;
Farewell---be just---adieu !
While we our orisons above,
To God do raise for you.”

Fir'd with filial love she now
Her steps does measure back;
To crave a parent's pardon she,
Would too no longer lack.

Yet sad forebodings tore her breast,
As she drew nearer home;
And recollection press'd the cause,
That forc'd her thus to roam.

And as she trac'd each well-known spot,
She once with pleasure view'd,
A secret horror thrill'd her soul:
Fresh phantoms still pursu'd!

She mentally exclaiming said,
“ Where will my mis'ry end;
Sure in my father I shall find,
One kind---one gen'rous friend.”

The village church at length appears,
With it her father's cot ;
But little was her mind prepar'd,
To meet her wretched lot.

For, lo ! a passing bell did sound,
With slow and solemn knell ;
She falt'ring paus'd, and soon the scene.
The dreadful truth did tell !

Soon she beheld, in solemn pace,
A group of mourners pass ;
Too soon she heard the direful tale,
That corse her father was !

That, when from his paternal roof,
She took her wretched flight ;
He from that moment never rose,
And died but yesternight.

That too, when on the bed of death,
He oft in anguish pray'd ;
For her, his only daughter, who
A villain had betray'd.

Then called on heaven to shower down
Its blessings on his child ;---
That ev'ry word he utt'rance gave,
Was tender---gen'rous---mild !

A mental pray'r escap'd her lips ;
She stood in mute despair ;---
Her eyes refuse their usual brine,
Keen anguish did her tear.

Each prospect she had fondly rear'd,
Now vanish'd into air ;
And ev'ry flatt'ring hope she'd felt,
Gave way to fell despair.

As night prevaded all around,
She to the church-yard stray'd ;
And weeping o'er the new-made grave,
In mournful silence pray'd.

The moon, swift gliding thro' the sky,
In silver brightness shone ;
With dreary hollow sound the church,
Seem'd echoing each moan.

And when the lark proclaim'd the dawn,
She knew not how to act ;
The grief which tore her wretched soul,
Did too, her brain distract.

When too, the last adieu she gave,
That tore her from the spot ;
She ponder'd on the road to take,
Yet flew to meet her lot.

To London, now her course she bends,
Yet knew not why she did ;
But still, a ray of hope she felt,
Her errors might be hid.

Thus do we feed our fancy up,
With light fantastic tales ;
At every shadow, quick we catch,
Still each endeavour fails.

Short-sighted mortals, how oft we take,
To shun fell ruin's road ;
The very path in which she's plac'd,
Her much abhor'd abode.

For there, too soon her fate she met,
A prostitute became ;
Ingulf'd in sin, behold she goes,
Devoid of sense or shame.

Behold she walks with haughty steps,
And spurns the lowly meek ;
While dress'd in pride's all-glitt'ring garb,
Fresh conquests fain would seek.

Full soon this reign of bliss was o'er,
Her pride soon fell to naught ;
By ev'ry haughty fop forsook,
For meaner conquests sought.

From plent'ous boards with viands fill'd,
Of most delicious taste ;
She fell, full soon, and curs'd each day,
She liv'd in wanton waste.

For now behold the place where she,
With wretchedness is seen ;
Alas, what numbers hurry there,
With dreadful haggard mien !

In ev'ry corner sits a wretch,
A prey to inward grief;
While, too, their outward forms decay,
No one affords relief.

Sure none this loathsome scene can view,
Who do not horror feel;
And pity too must strike the heart,
Tho temper'd into steel.

For hid within this spot there lurks,
Those canker-worms of life;
Disease---despair---and ev'ry woe,
That breeds perpetual strife.

See, anguish wrings each death-like form
With agonizing pain;
While still in each convulsive stare,
Is painted dark disdain.

Hark, how each blasphemous wretch,
Unconscious of her state,
With dreadful curses rends the air,
Still careless of her fate.

Here fell intoxication stalks,
With ruthless steps along;
And spurs to deeds of deeper dye,
Yet unexplain'd by tongue.

From hence the midnight villain flies,
Too sure his prey to find;
'Tis here, betray'd, is youth and age,
To endless sleep consign'd!

Oh, may we ne'er behold this spot,
Where pois'nous vapours fly;
Or go within the haunts of vice,
Unless reclaim to try,

But let us view this hapless wretch,
Whose hist'ry we pursue ;
And follow still, in ev'ry stage,
This tale, alas, too true.

Behold each night, with haggard form
She stalks along the street ;
To catch with vice's pois'nous hook,
Each thoughtless youth she'd meet.

Soon with those ways her bloom it fell,
Her beauty, too, gave way ;
With sloth and vice she still resides,]
And dreads the dawning day.

Full oft, while hunger gnaws her frame,
Too plain her looks do prove,
Piercing with cold, in winter's blasts,
She day and night does rove,

Disease, too, gnaws her inward frame,
No friend has she to cheer ;
Her health is fled---her form decay'd,
And death approaches near !

The dreadful pangs that rend her heart,
No language can express ;
For sore upon her languid frame,
Does palid want oppress.

Tho' partial health resum'd her seat,
No beauty caught the eye ;
A death-like hue o'er cast her face,
Her lovers from her fly.

By all neglected---scorn'd---abus'd,---
How wretched is her lot ;
And many heart-rent sigh she heaves,
For her lost parents' cot.

Now, to the meanest vice she stoops---

Then bends to her sad fate :---

Now, hopes repentance will her save---

Then fears it is too late.

At length, with sad disease worn out,

She leaves this fell abode ;

To seek in some less noted place,

Some easement of her load.

In hopes, when from this scene remov'd,

She could reform her ways ;

But, ah ! in this she was deceiv'd,

For still with vice she strays.

Inur'd to sin, she could not leave

This shameful, wanton course ;

But still for lucre barter that,

Which first was took by force.

For who can say sophistic arts
Do not our reason bind ;
Then, sure they claim the just man's scorn,
Since force and they are join'd.

To drown the thought of mis'ry past,
To nauseous draughts she flies ;
Then madness siezes on her mind,
Which for lost honor sighs.

Degraded---lost---and shun'd by all,
Naughts but abuse she meets ;
And ev'ry wretch she'd once have scorn'd,
She now with rapture greets.

But when the tide of life is run,
What horror will appear ;
And o'er the retrospect she'll shed,
We'll hope, no fruitless tear.

For, still we hope, the all-wise God,
This wretch will not forsake ;
Or to perdition doom her soul,
But let her peace partake.

What horror does seduction spread,
In each delusive dream !
How many vot'ries greedy grasp
Her silver-glitt'ring stream !

This wretched girl an emblem is
Of curst illicit love ;
And ev'ry scene most plainly does
A villain's baseness prove.

Her dress, now mark---her gait to view---
Speak they a mind at ease ?
Ah, no !---for can a life like this
E'en harden'd wretches please ?

See melancholy on her brow,
And mark each vacant stare ;
See falsehood painted on her cheek,
Her actions speak despair.

But her we'll leave, in hopes that she
May still reform her ways ;
And free from wretchedness and guilt,
Spend her remaining days.

We'll hope that philanthropic aid,
Its fost'ring care will shew ;
When from her vicious course she turns,
And heal each cank'ring woe.

For pity, surely, ought to flow,
For females guided wrong ;
As all their faults are not their own,
But, man, to THEE belong.

Say, how can you, ungen'rous man,
Betray your better part ?
Say, how can you with anguish wring,
A woman's tender heart ?

Sure, did you but a moment pause,
Before the wound you gave ;
You'd strive by every art you knew,
From ruin them to save.

Could you but feel the parent's pang,
The wretched girl's sad fate,
You would withhold the vicious joy.
Ere that it was too late.

But, ah, within the breasts of those,
Who no real pleasure own ;
'Tis there that ev'ry lustful weed,
Is to perfection grown.

Still, sure, there are some virtuous minds,
That drive fell vice afar ;
Who'd spurn at pleasure that must leave
Behind a dreadful scar.

To them each lovely maiden's plea,
Will ne'er be made in vain ;
But by their fost'ring care they'll strive.
To sooth each cank'ring pain.

Duplicity, a woman's bane,
By men of sense is spurn'd ;
For to the precepts truth instils,
Their eyes are ever turn'd.

What ills does prostitution bring
Upon the female race !
What dreadful tortures do they feel,
Beside their dread disgrace.

The span of life is much too short,
With justice to explain ;
And, e'en the world must have its end,
Ere we can speak their pain.

Yet, oh!---to sympathize and feel
For fallen worth a pang ;
Must cast a lustre o'er the heart,
Which ne'er by vice was wrang.

The victim of this tale we have,
In many stages seen ;
And many thousands like to her,
In the same track have been.

But since, she wretchedly docs still
With fell distress abide ;
We'll cast our eyes on those whom we
Cannot with guilt e'er chide.

Then, now, ye fair, who're blest with peace
Keep firm in virtue's road ;
Nor ever let your minds once stray
To vice's curst abode.

For, hid within her path there lurks,
A viper's pois'nous sting ;
Which, if by flatt'ring looks you're sway'd,
Will ruin on you bring.

To ev'ry thoughtless view she holds
A glitt'ring, golden cup ;
And with ensnaring wiles she tempts
The heedless maid to sup.

But by such false delusive charms,
Be you not taught to stray ;
For direful ruin will you o'ertake,
If thus you're led away.

'Twas by those pleasing dreams of bliss,
This wretched maiden fell ;
And by one fatal step was forc'd
With dire despair to dwell.

'Twas by the false delusive arts,
Her lover held to view ;
That from her half-unwilling heart,
The fell consent he drew.

Then keep a watchful guard around
Your palpitating heart ;
Lest, by the same ensnaring wiles,
From honor you depart.

For, see, the wily adder close
Unto your bosom creeps ;
To lull suspicion unto rest,
While still your conscience sleeps

'Tis thus, the self-conceited fop,
With flatt'ry greets the ear ;
That he suspicion from your breast,
May quick remove afar.

Thus, by his pois'nous arts he draws
Insensibly away ;
Your unsuspecting heart, by guile,
From virtue's path astray.

Nor heeds the wound which he inflicts,
Upon your guiltless mind ;
But, hurries on his vicious course,
Some other dupe to find.

Thus, when your honor once is lost,
Your brightest jewel's fled ;
Then does your conscience you upbraid,
Which long had dormant laid.

A parent's dreaded curse you'll feel,
With this poor hapless wretch ;
In vain will you, your longing arms,
To your betrayer stretch.

His heart, to ev'ry sense of grief,
Is cas'd with temper'd steel,
Nor, can he ever for your pain,
Commiseration feel.

Too true, alas, this picture is,
Which now is painted here ;
And oft, by it, the heart is wrung,
With grief too strong to bear.

Could we but tell how many bow,
To man's most base chicane ;
Then would our hearts with anguish wring,
To hear, and know their pain.

Tho' thousands treat with scorn the wretch
Who thus has basely fell ;
Yet thousands, too, must shed a tear,
At each departing knell.

But, see, benignant walks along,
Yon lovely, virtuous fair ;
See, her fair form, with honor deck'd,
She to her friends is dear.

No sharp corroding pain she feels,
For all is peace within ;---
Each day she meets a parent's smile,
Which still fresh pleasure bring.

Carress'd by all---by all admir'd,
An emblem of content ;
She strives to heal the pain of those
Whose hearts with grief are rent.

'Tis thus, ye lovely fair, that you,
Will be the world's first germe;
While you the paths of virtue tread,
With steady steps, and firm.

Then soon shall prostitution die,
Nor e'er more raise its head;
And ev'ry vice, too, then shall fall,
And mingle with the dead!

